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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 6, 2005



**SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA ASSOCIATION OF GOVERNMENTS
APPROVES 2005 LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM**

LOS ANGELES – In a strong show of regional unity, local elected leaders from six Southern California counties approved a comprehensive and ambitious legislative program at the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) Regional Council meeting today.

“We are bringing Congress and the State Legislature a broad-based message of consensus and unity on a series of critical policies and investments that are vital to our region,” said Temecula City Council member and SCAG President Ron Roberts.

At the federal level, SCAG identified reauthorization of the Transportation Equity Act for the Twenty-First Century (TEA-21) as its top priority. TEA-21 – the federal government’s primary surface transportation measure – has been extended until May 31, and SCAG will be working hard to maximize funding opportunities for Southern California in the reauthorization. SCAG will also seek to improve the flow of Consolidated Planning Grant (CPG) dollars to maximize the effectiveness of SCAG’s ongoing planning initiatives.

As it has in the previous two legislative sessions, SCAG will be organizing the Southern California Consensus Program – a six-county joint legislative advocacy effort intended to unify the region around a series of key transportation priorities. Transportation leaders from the six Southern California counties will travel to Washington, D.C. in February to advocate jointly for a package of priority projects once the package receives final approval by SCAG’s Regional Council next month.

Other federal legislative priorities include:

- Supporting efforts to ensure that states receive at least a 95% return in federal transportation funding compared to their respective gasoline tax revenues. California has historically generated significantly higher gas tax revenues than it receives in federal dollars.
- Promoting the development of a regional airport system to accommodate future passenger and cargo demands in Southern California.
- Seeking appropriations for projects contained in the Southern California Consensus Program.
- Supporting design-build and design-sequencing procedures to expedite the completion of transportation projects.
- Increasing federal funds to improve air quality in non-attainment areas for ozone and particulate matter.
- Increasing funding for Metropolitan Planning Organizations like SCAG to account for increased regional planning responsibilities.

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At the state level, SCAG's top legislative priority will be to develop a collaborative effort with Business, Transportation & Housing Secretary Sunne Wright McPeak and other housing stakeholders throughout the state to redefine the local and regional responsibilities in implementing state housing goals. In 2004, SCAG was instrumental in the development and passage of AB 2158 (Lowenthal) and AB 2348 (Mullin) to implement reforms to state housing element law. SCAG will also work closely with the Administration to ensure that future housing needs are being met and that affordable housing will be developed throughout the region.

On the state transportation front, SCAG plans to support a constitutional amendment to protect gasoline sales taxes from further diversions of transportation improvement funding to the state's General Fund. SCAG will also work closely with the Schwarzenegger Administration to implement a new state initiative designed to make critical investments in California's goods movement network of ports, roads, highways and rail systems.

For more information about SCAG's Legislative Program, please contact Don Rhodes, SCAG's Manager of Government Affairs (213/236-1840; Rhodes@scag.ca.gov).

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